

INFANTRY LETTERS



AOE "NOT WORKING"

In August 1986, the 82d Airborne Division implemented TOE changes under the Army of Excellence (AOE) plan. While many of the changes were well thought out and did, in fact, exploit our new weapon systems and equipment, the plan was not without flaw.

First, there have been several problems in the infantry rifle platoon since the implementation of AOE.

The 11-man rifle squad was reduced to nine men. This was due in part to the addition of the M249 machinegun. The M249 added a degree of lethality to the squad. With the M249, M16A2, M203, and AT-4, the rifle squad was now more highly armed than at any previous time.

But what have we achieved when SSG X has only five men to deploy against the enemy? When he deployed to DESERT SHIELD (as part of the 82d Airborne Division, he thought he would see combat soon after arriving) his squad consisted of himself, the Alpha Team leader, the Bravo Team leader, and two privates (M249 machinegunners). Instead of *fire teams* he had *fire pairs*. Such a student-to-teacher ratio is fine for a small liberal arts college, but not for an airborne rifle squad.

It would be a wonderful Army if leaders could go to war with every one of their weapon systems manned by personnel who did not get sick, go to DA schools, or have to testify at courts martial. These were the actual reasons SSG X's squad deployed with only five of its eight assigned members.

If the Army would return to the 11-man squad, squad leaders would deploy with a total of seven or eight members instead of five. SSG X's fire team leaders are carrying the M16A2/M203 40mm grenade launcher. They now have to cover the squad's dead space in a

defense when they should be more concerned with controlling the rate and distribution of fire in their team. But then again they hardly have a team, do they?

It has been said frequently over the past few years that today's NCO is more motivated, intelligent, and knowledgeable than any of his kind before him. Explain this to the team leaders who get to exercise these abilities on one team member each. If the Army returned to the 11-man rifle squads,



these two sergeants could bank on a fire team of at least three or four men, even with attrition, sickness, and any other reasons a soldier would be "off the net."

Second, the elimination of the M60 machinegun ammunition bearer under AOE has created a big problem. The weight of the machinegun and its component parts has not changed. The weight of the ammunition has not changed. Neither has the weight of the night vision devices, binoculars, winter

packing lists, or the soldier's individual load. Yet we eliminated this third man in the crew.

For those who may not remember: As a weapons squad leader before AOE, this is how I cross-loaded my squad.

The M60 machinegunner carried the M60, 200 rounds of ammunition, AN/PVS-4, cleaning kit with range cards, and sidearm (the .45 caliber was the pre-AOE pistol).

The M60 assistant gunner carried the spare barrel, traversing and elevating mechanism, tripod pintle, asbestos glove, 200 rounds of M60 ammunition, cleaning kit, binoculars, and a sidearm. (Personally, I would have replaced the sidearm with the M203 grenade launcher to enable the assistant gunner to cover the dead space in front of the machinegun.)

The ammunition bearer carried the machinegun tripod, 400 rounds of ammunition, the M16 rifle with 5.56mm ammunition, cleaning kit, and any radio or telephone equipment that the squad might be augmented with. (The ammunition is based on a basic load of 800 rounds.)

With AOE, none of this equipment has been deleted except the assistant gunner's sidearm. Yet two men are now carrying what was quite a load for three. Take into account that the two-man crew must still pack required items when going to the field as well as comfort items that no soldier likes to give up.

Not too long after AOE was implemented, my platoon participated in a platoon live fire assault course. I watched my soldiers struggling to fire and move while carrying the M60, tripod with T and E and pintle, spare barrel bag complete, M16A2, 600 rounds of 7.62 ball ammunition, binoculars, and all their load carrying equipment. If ever a weapon system was designed for three men, it was the M60.

Since the two-man crew was implemented, I have rarely seen a machinegun crew drill being conducted. The field manual for the M60 machinegun, FM 23-67, gives a detailed outline of how crew drill is to be conducted — with three men, not two. Crew drill, of course, is a useful tool that a leader can use to instill teamwork, confidence, and a working knowledge of the system into his crew members. To do it correctly, though, I must augment the M60 crew with another platoon member. While this may be excellent cross training for that soldier, he is not an assigned part of that gun crew.

The Army of Excellence is now more than four years old. While the concept of a light, lethal rifle platoon was an idea whose time many thought had come, it is not without flaws. We, today's infantry leaders, need to accept these mistakes, correct them, and drive on.

JOE MORLEY

SSG

3d Battalion, 504th Infantry
Operation DESERT SHIELD

ITVs IN BRADLEY UNITS

The conversion to the Bradley MTOE in the near future necessitates a review of the Echo Company in the line battalions. In short, retaining the M901 ITV in a Bradley infantry battalion makes very little sense for the following reasons:

- Every M2A2 Bradley has a TOW II capability.
- The M901 is a complex, "quick fix" system that is difficult to maintain at the best of times.
- The M901 will not be able to keep up with the M2A2 in maneuver; in fact, it cannot keep up with the M113A2 now.
- There are no conceivable missions for the M901-equipped Echo Company other than in the defense. With the reduction of the possibility of war in Europe, the U.S. Army will become more offense-oriented in the near future. Our current mission in Saudi Arabia is a case in point.

An issue related to the retention of

the Echo Company is the scout platoon's conversion to HMMWVs (high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles). Although this concept was tested at the National Training Center (NTC), the test failed to duplicate artillery fire against soft vehicles. The scouts have also lost the Bradley's excellent night observation capabilities. Scouts are now vulnerable to all arms fire and are limited in night observation — not a particularly good trade-off, in my view.

One solution to these problems would be to put the HMMWV scout platoon in Echo Company and give that unit the specific additional mission and training of a reconnaissance/counter-reconnaissance company. The NTC has shown repeatedly that winning the recon/counter-recon battle is essential to successful combat operations. A part of the counter-recon battle is to kill the enemy's recon assets — something HMMWV scouts can no longer accomplish effectively. In this solution, the scout HMMWVs would work in close coordination with the M901s, with the M901s providing a night vision capability plus overwatch fires if necessary.

A better solution would be to take the six M3 Bradley cavalry vehicles the scouts were slated to get at one time and put them in Echo Company in place of the 12 ITVs. The scheduled force reductions in Europe and the continental United States should also make it possible to raise the count to eight M3s per Echo Company. Again, the Echo Company mission would be recon/counter-recon and antiarmor. The unit structure would be two platoons of four M3s each and a HMMWV scout platoon.

There are enough structure spaces within the current Echo Company and scout platoon MTOEs to achieve the required spaces with some left over. Those remaining slots should be used to create dismount teams for the M3s, another area where we are habitually short in the recon/counter-recon battle.

There is obviously still a need, even in a Bradley battalion, for a designated antiarmor company with which to influence the tank-mechanized infantry battle at the decisive place and time.

But an M901 antiarmor company is not the best we can do for the Army of the 21st Century, or even of the 1990s.

We are still weak in the recon/counter-recon capability with HMMWV scouts. I strongly recommend that we mount Company E in either M2 or M3 vehicles and add the scout platoon to that unit. This configuration would afford the ground combat battalion the greatest latitude.

E.W. CHAMBERLAIN III

LTC, Infantry

1st Battalion, 18th Infantry

Operation DESERT SHIELD

11TH AIR ASSAULT MATERIALS NEEDED

The National Infantry Museum needs material dealing with the 11th Air Assault Division (Test), activated 7 February 1963 at Fort Benning and inactivated 1 July 1965, also at Fort Benning.

Photographs are especially needed, as are pamphlets, manuals, and other printed material dealing with its equipment and history. (Photographs should be labeled as to date and what or who is pictured as completely and accurately as possible.) Also needed are uniforms (especially fatigues), equipment, and mementos.

Anyone who has items to donate may contact Mr. Z. Frank Hanner, Curator, National Infantry Museum, Building 396, Fort Benning, GA 31905-5273; telephone AUTOVON 835-2958 or commercial (404) 545-2958.

Photographs and other printed matter can be mailed directly to the above address without prior contact. Other items should not be sent until the museum has determined that there is a need for them in the collection.

TED C. CHILCOTE

COL, U.S. Army

Director of Plans, Training

and Mobilization

Fort Benning, Georgia

BATTLE OF DONG HA

Having written *Battle for Hue, Into Laos, Death Valley, and Into Cambodia*, I am now researching a proposed book on the Battle of Dong Ha (April-May 1968). In addition to Marine Corps and Navy personnel, this battle also involved the 3d Battalion, 21st Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, at Nhi Ha, and advisors with the 1st ARVN Division.

I would greatly appreciate hearing from any veterans of these actions so I can arrange interviews.

Write or call me at 200 Kingsville Court, Webster Groves, MO 63119; (314) 645-1867 or 961-7577.

KEITH WILLIAM NOLAN

INFORMATION SOUGHT ON FORT SEWARD, ALASKA

Plans are under way to create an interpretive center at historic Fort William H. Seward in Haines, Alaska. Later renamed Chilkoot Barracks, the fort's turn-of-the-century buildings still guard the waters of Alaska's Inside Passage.

The interpretive center, which will portray life in a frontier Army fort from 1902 through World War II, will be dedicated in the summer of 1992 during a reunion of Army veterans who served in Alaska.

The Haines Chamber of Commerce is seeking information, artifacts, pictures, and memorabilia from the fort and also plans a series of taped oral histories on the fort and military life.

The Chamber is also seeking the names and addresses of people who served at Fort Seward-Chilkoot Barracks, or those of their descendants. For

more information, please write to me at Box 518, Haines, AK 99827, or call toll free 1-800-458-3579 (FAX 907-766-3155).

CYNTHIA AUKERMAN
Haines Chamber of Commerce

FIRST DIVISION REUNION

The Society of the First Division (Big Red One), which is composed of men who served in World War I, World War II, Vietnam, and in peacetime, will hold its 73d Annual Reunion from 10 to 14 July 1991 in San Jose, California.

For further information, please contact me at 5 Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19118; telephone (215) 836-4841.

ARTHUR L. CHAITT
Executive Director

AMERICANS WITH CANADIAN FORCES

I am trying to get in touch with any Americans who served in the Canadian forces during World War II.

My address is 82 Florizel Avenue, Nepean, Ontario, Canada K2H 9R1; telephone (613) 996-1388.

FRED GAFFEN
Military Historian

2d INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION

The 2d Infantry (Indianhead) Division Association wants everyone who ever served in the 2d Infantry Division to become members of the association.

The address of the association's national headquarters is P.O. Box 460, Buda, TX 78610.

BILL CREECH
National Secretary

GUIDE DOG INSTRUCTOR POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc., offers career opportunities for military personnel who have experience and interest in working with dogs.

The organization's 11-acre campus is the base for a program that trains purebred dogs as guides for blind people who qualify.

Applications for paid staff positions as instructors and instructor assistants are being accepted through the Department of Training, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc., P.O. Box 151200, San Rafael, CA 94915.

JENNIFER CONROY
Publicity Office

HORSE SOLDIERS

I am interviewing old horse soldiers — cavalymen, remount service personnel, field and pack artillerymen — for a book length project: *Hoofbeats into History: An Oral History of America's Last Horse Soldiers*. Since infantry units for many years had pack mules assigned to them, I would also be delighted to send my questionnaire to old infantrymen.

Anyone who is interested may write to me at 5518 East 36th Street, Tulsa, OK 74135; or call (918) 665-3146.

STEPHEN B. McCARTNEY

